

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-07 FEAE-00
DODE-00 ERDA-05 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 PA-01 PRS-01
USIA-06 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DHA-02 AF-10 /114 W
-----034726 081710Z /50

R 081239Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5265

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 11173

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, IN

SUBJ: CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE ATTACK ON PM

DESAI'S NUCLEAR POLICY

1. MEETING IN NEW DELHI AUGUST 7, THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE (CWC) APPROVED RESOLUTIONS CRITICIZING THE JANATA GOVERNMENT ON THREE COUNTS: ITS ALLEGED FAILURE TO STEM RISING PRICES, ITS DEVIATION FROM THE ACCEPTED POLICIES OF NON-ALIGNMENT, AND MORARJI DESAI'S STAND AGAINST TESTING NUCLEAR DEVICES. THE RESOLUTION ON NUCLEAR POLICY OPENS WITH THE CONTENTION THAT NO TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE "THE EXCLUSIVE POSSESSION OF A FEW PRIVILEGED COUNTRIES" AND THAT NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO INDIA BECAUSE OF ITS LARGE DEPOSITS OF THORIUM. NOTING THE CONSISTENT POLICY OF CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS OVER THE YEARS THAT INDIA SHOULD BE SELF-RELIANT IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, THE CWC RESOLUTION HAILS THE 1974 POKHARAN EXPLOSION AS "THE HALL-MARK OF ACHIEVEMENT BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE HARD WORK OF OUR BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS AND THE DETERMINATION OF THE

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POLITICAL LEADERSHIP."

2. THE CWC NOTES "WITH CONCERN" PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S STATEMENTS AGAINST PNE'S, DESCRIBING HIS POSITION AS "AN UNFORTUNATE DEPARTURE" FROM PREVIOUS GOI POLICY. THE RESOLUTION STATES THAT THE US CONTINUES TO CONSIDER THE USES OF PNE'S FOR CANAL EXCAVATION AND OTHER

PURPOSES AND THAT INDIA MUST SIMILARLY KEEP PACE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD IN DEVELOPING NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES. "THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE DEPRECATES THE EXTERNAL PRESSURES NOW BEING BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO DEVIATE FROM THE COUNTRY'S CHOSEN PATH OF SELF-RELIANCE IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, CLOSING ITS OPTIONS OF EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS." IT ALSO STATES THAT PRESSURE MAY BE BROUGHT TO SLOW DOWN INDIA'S FAST BREEDER PROGRAM AND THE EXPANSION OF REPROCESSING FACILITIES. THE RESOLUTION CHARGES THAT THE DESAI GOVERNMENT HAS NOT DISPELLED STRONG PUBLIC DOUBTS "PARTICULARLY IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY" THAT IT HAS ALREADY YIELDED TO THESE EXTERNAL PRESSURES. THE CWC ALSO TOOK ISSUE WITH THE PM'S STATEMENT THAT THE GOI CAN ALWAYS RECONSIDER ITS DECISION ON PNE'S IN CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS. THE RESOLUTION ASKS RHETORICALLY: "WHO ARE THESE OTHER PEOPLE? DO VITAL NATIONAL OPTIONS REQUIRE RATIFICATION BY OTHERS," CALLING IT "UNFORTUANTE" THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE DENIED THE CHANCE TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES WHILE OTHER NATIONS CONTINUE TO DEVELOP MORE POWERFUL WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION, THE RESOLUTION CALLS UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT "NO AREA OF PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IS RULED OUT."

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R 081239Z AUG 77
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3. IN ITS RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION,
THE CWC CLAIMS THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT'S STRESS ON

"GENUINE" NON-ALIGNMENT IS CREATING THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE MAY BE A "SUBTLE SHIFT" IN GOI FOREIGN POLICY. THE COMMITTEE POINTS OUT THAT NON-ALIGNMENTS AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE THIRD WORLD DOES NOT MEAN "EQUI-DISTANCE" BETWEEN THE POWER BLOCS AND EXPRESSES THE HOPE THAT THE DESAI GOVERNMENT" WILL NOT SWERVE FROM THE PATH BY ANY NOTION THAT 'GENUINE' NON-ALIGNMENT IS ANYTHING DIFFERENT." THE CWC RESOLUTION ALSO "VIEWS WITH ANXIETY THE GROWING THREAT TO PEACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA BY THE STRENGTHENING OF THE MILITARY BASE IN DIEGO GARCIA", NOTES THE "NEW DANGER THROUGH EXPLOSION OF THE NEUTRON BOMB" AND CONDEMNS THE "ATTITUDE OF CERTAIN MAJOR POWERS" WHICH CONTINUE THEIR ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH RACIST REGIMES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

4. COMMENT. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL MONTHS, MRS GANDHI ATTENDED THE AUGUST 7 CWC MEETING, A MOVE WHICH IS WIDELY REGARDED AS ANOTHER STEP IN HER RECENT CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFORTS TO STAGE A POLITICAL COME-BACK. ACCORDING TO SOME PRESS REPORTS, SHE TOOK AN ACTIVE HAND IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE THREE RESOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTED SEVERAL CHANGES IN THE TEXTS.

5. THE RESOLUTION ON NUCLEARPOLICY ELABORATES AND FORMALIZES THE CHARGES MADE AGAINST DESAI'S POSITION ON PNES IN PARLIAMENT BY OPPOSITION LEADER CHAVAN AND OTHERS (NEW DELHI 9999) AND PLAYED UP IN THE CONGRESS PARTY'S NATIONAL HERALD AND ELSEWHERE IN THE PRESS. THE INGREDIENTS OF THE RESOLUTION ARE FAMILIAR: THEY FOCUS ON ELEMENTS WHICH APPEAL TO INDIAN NATIONALISM AND EFFORTS TOWARD NUCLEAR SELF-RELIANCE AND TO THE COUNTRY'S SENSE OF SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT. THE HIGH-LIGHTING OF THE DOUBTS IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY ON THE ADVISABILITY OF "FORECLOSING THE PNE OPTION" HAS BEEN A FEATURE OF EARLIER CRITICISM. THE CWC'S EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT PRESSURES TO SLOW DOWN INDIA'S FAST BREEDER PROGRAM AND THE EXPANSION OF ITS REPROCESSING FACILITIES IS A PORTENT OF FUTURE POLITICAL BATTLE SHOULD THE GOI GO BEYOND ITS PRESENT POSITION IN RESPONSE TO PROLIFERATION CONCERNS.

6. THE RESOLUTION ON NON-ALIGNMENT WAS ALSO FORE-SHADOWED BY POSITIONS TAKEN BY CONGRESS SPOKESMEN DURING THE LOK SABHA DEBATE ON THE MEA DEMAND FOR GRANTS. (THERE WILL BE A FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN THE RAJYA SABHA TOMORROW, THE FINAL AY OF ITS CURRENT SESSION.) BECAUSE THE SHIFT IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

APPROACH HAS BEEN MORE A MATTER OF NUANCE THAN A
CLEARLY DEFINED CHANGE IN DIRECTION, THE GOI PRESENTS
MUCH LESS OF A TARGET IN THIS AREA THAN IT DOES IN
THE NUCLEAR FIELD. THE CWC RESOLUTION SERVES AS A
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WARNING THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY
MOVES ARE UNDER CAREFUL SCRUTINY, AND SUGGESTS THAT
SHIFTS TOWARD CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE US AND THE
WEST MAY BE MADE A POLITICAL ISSUE BY THE CONGRESS
PARTY.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, PINT, IN, CONGRESSIONAL WORKING COMMITTEE, (DESAI, MORARJI)
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